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THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

In the first part of a suggestive book,¹ Lipsius subjects the prevalent religious theories of knowledge to a searching and destructive criticism by the application of the results of present-day psychology and logic. In the second part of his work he applies the same principles to dissolve the doctrines of theology, and determine the limits of a rationally grounded religious faith. Lipsius asserts that *die emotionale Theologie* fails to make good its claim to any peculiar source of religious knowledge or to any specific theological theory of knowledge. He concludes that *die rationale Theologie* has not bridged the yawning gulf to the transcendental, and the result attained must be the surrender of the religious view of the world. Moreover, the religious ideas of the supernatural are not only groundless, but, in our modern scientific view of the world, they are useless. For the religious view must have a God who is creator and director of the individual as of the whole; but the supernatural can have place in our scientific view of the world neither in the beginning nor in the process. The religious concept of God contains contradictions. God must be eternal, above time and space; but we have the contradiction of *einer zeitlosen Allzeitlichkeit und einer vollendeten Unendlichkeit*. Personality involves limitations, objects to overcome, discursive thinking, purposes to realize, and, as such, cannot be applied to God; and the same contradiction appears in the conception of absolute perfection. The man who recognizes the force of logic in divine things is obliged to surrender religious dogma. But Lipsius finds that we are compelled to posit the universality of law, or a principle of unity in the world. A necessity then not merely operates in the world to maintain a *status quo*, but may be conceived as an immanent idea of self-development, so that we may say that personalities represent the essence of the world. While we are not allowed to hypostasize this principle of unity into a being (*Wesen*) apart from the world, still in a symbolic way we may represent it by the God-idea. Lipsius concludes that if religion means the special guidance of the individual life, then the modern man must surrender it; but there is still necessity for religion as faith in the conformity of the world to law; and this faith is the basis of all thinking and moral action.

W. C. KEIRSTEAD.

ROCKFORD, ILL.

¹ *Kritik der theologischen Erkenntniss*. Von Friedrich Reinhard Lipsius. Berlin: Schwetschke & Sohn, 1904. Pp. 212. M. 5.50.